United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1744
5 October 1994

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Zaire says preventive diplomacy could have averted Rwanda tragedy; Malawi, Mauritius, Malaysia, Philippines and United Arab Emirates also speak in General Assembly's general debate.

- Secretary-General expresses grave concern at deterioration of humanitarian conditions in Liberia; calls on warring factions to create conditions for resumption of relief operations.

- Cape Verde says true collective security requires shared progress towards development; Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Paraguay, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Albania among other speakers in general debate yesterday.

• • •

Kengo Wa Dondo, Prime Minister of the Transitional Government of Zaire, told the General Assembly today that the world was faced with a triple crisis in politics, economics and human society. Of all the answers suggested, preventive diplomacy was the most effective. Many current conflicts could have been avoided had the international community been involved at an early stage. Preventive diplomacy should have been used in the case of Rwanda. The tragedy would not have occurred if the parties had respected the Arusha agreements. The international community could have ensured respect for the agreements and placed troops on the ground to prevent the carnage which ensued.

The flood of refugees from Rwanda had overwhelmed neighbouring countries, he continued. The tragedy had occurred at the time of the investiture of a new Government in Zaire, and it had only been able to apply stopgap measures. The return of refugees was being thwarted by various factors, including intimidation by the militia and the old military masters of Rwanda. Efforts by the new Government in Kigali to reassure the refugees were inadequate. The world must help Hutus and Tutsis to return to Rwanda to live in harmony. There must be power-sharing between the parties, the establisment of a multi-ethnic army, guarantees of safe return for refugees and assistance to countries of asylum and the country of origin.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

President Bakili Muluzi of Malawi said human rights and fundamental freedoms could not be enjoyed where people lived in conditions of economic desperation. As the majority of its people lived in extreme poverty, Malawi had given poverty alleviation top priority. External debt, drought, HIV/AIDS and an influx of refugees had all contributed to the country's difficult situation. He expressed confidence that Malawi's partners in development would assist in efforts to improve living standards, and appealed for the country's debts to be written off. Any assistance given to Malawi would be used for the intended purpose. He invited the private and public sectors to invest in the country, citing opportunities in such areas as tourism, mining and banking.

Implementation of the Agenda for Development deserved the support of the international financial and donor communities, he continued. Persistent problem areas -- debt servicing, access to technology for development, rapid population growth, and social development issues -- must be tackled. The priorities outlined in the Agenda and the programme of action outlined in the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s were critical to the continent's development. Despite its shortcomings, the United Nations remained a viable option for addressing the political and socio-economic issues that confronted the world today. Through the Organization, the world could become a better place.

Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth of Mauritius said the United Nations system should be overhauled, with a view to improving transparency and taking into consideration the aspirations of developing countries. The Security Council should be made more effective and more representative. Developing countries had very different concerns from the developed ones, and had a right to representation on the Council. Africa and Latin America should have permanent seats. Council decisions should be reached by consensus, although the veto system should be maintained for some time.

Africa needed a clear vision of hope which would ensure its integration into international economic and trading systems, he went on to say. Its marginalization, deliberate or accidental, must be ended and reversed. In Mauritius, rapid economic strides had been accompanied by consistent social and cultural progress which strengthened democracy. Political stability, good governance, and respect for basic human rights and freedoms were prerequisites for economic development. It was the duty of the international community to ensure progress. In a time of the survival of the fittest and the most competitive, the salvation of the weak and small economies depended on the successful implementation of regional cooperation and integration programmes. The international community should support that process, especially in Africa.

Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, said development was the only secure foundation for global peace and security. The origins of conflicts were often buried deep in socio-economic deprivations and disparities, yet the promises made at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) remained unfulfilled. Official development assistance (ODA) should be increased to reach the targets set. The developed countries should share the responsibility for protecting

tropical forests, which belonged to the whole world. While Malaysia shared the fundamental objectives of the recent International Conference on Population and Development, it deplored the attempt to impose views without regard to the values of others.

The United Nations was unable to deal effectively with critical global issues, he said. The Security Council remained paralysed on the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was unable to implement its own resolutions. The Council was ready to plunge into the Persian Gulf crisis a few years ago, but now demonstrated political timidity and a clear lack of resolve. It should be reformed on the basis of equitable geographical representation and be made more accountable to the United Nations membership. The issue was not one of enlarging the permanent membership of the Council, but of enhanced participation. The first step must be to increase the number of non-permanent members.

Roberto Romulo, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, said economic development did not necessarily mean a better life for the individual citizen. Economic growth could not be sustained if the individual were not mobilized and empowered to take an active part in the development process. Growth was meaningless to the individual who did not share in its benefits or whose community was destroyed by it. A society could not find fulfilment in growth if it did not take adequate care of women, children, ethnic minorities, the handicapped and the homeless. In the Philippines, peace and national reconciliation had been secured through a process that included discussion with dissident elements and a generous amnesty. The system of democratic pluralism had been restored. Fundamental rights and freedoms were being safeguarded, and people were being empowered.

The United Nations should agree on a set of guiding principles for the establishment and conduct of peace-keeping operations, which were growing in number and complexity, he went on to say. While the composition and methods of the Security Council must reflect the realities of political and economic power, imbalances must be redressed. The general membership of the United Nations must participate in decision-making. That would require enlarging the Council's membership and reforming its methods and procedures. Its membership should be geographically balanced, with an increase in the representation of developing countries. The Council must also improve the transparency of its working and decision-making process.

Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, said his country's policy was based on respect for the sovereignty and independence of States, non-interference in their internal affairs, and peaceful coexistence. It was ready to settle, by peaceful means, a dispute over the islands of Lesser Tunb, Greater Tunb and Abu Musa, which had been occupied by Iran in 1971. As Iran had not responded to all the initiatives by the United Arab Emirates, his Government had declared its readiness to resort to the International Court of Justice and had pledged to fully accept its Judgment.

(more)

The Iraqi regime must meet its legal and political obligations to Kuwait, as stipulated in Security Council resolutions, he continued. The Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the agreements on the Palestinian and Jordanian tracks were the first real progress in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Progress was also needed on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks based on the principle of land for peace. However, the United Arab Emirates was deeply concerned over Israel's acquisition of an immense nuclear capability which constituted a constant threat to the security of the region. It was also concerned about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The international community and the Security Council should reconsider their procedures for dealing with that question. The Council must take firmer measures against the Serbian aggressor and must lift the arms embargo against Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed grave concern over the deterioration of humanitarian conditions in Liberia. He called on the warring factions to end the wanton destruction of life and property, and to create conditions for the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance to all Liberians in need.

Intense fighting erupted in many parts of Liberia early last month, particularly in the central region around the town of Gbarnga. More than 100,000 people have been displaced, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered 55,000 new arrivals in Guinea and 40,000 in Côte d'Ivoire. Some 700,000 people had already been exiled since the Liberian civil war started in 1989.

While those crossing the border will receive emergency assistance from the UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP), thousands of civilians trapped inside Liberia cannot be reached. The intense fighting, disregard of the security of humanitarian workers and seizure of their vehicles, equipment and relief stocks have forced the suspension of humanitarian assistance outside Monrovia and its environs.

* * *

Carlos Alberto Wahnon de Carvalho Veiga, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Cape Verde, told the General Assembly yesterday that the state of peace and development was less than satisfactory. Conflicts had proliferated, while conditions of poverty had expanded. There was an overall lack of vision, cooperation and tolerance. The most complex challenges facing the international community touched on the issue of development. True collective security hinged on shared progress in justice and equality. The desired level of development could not be limited by narrow-minded realism -- the United Nations must shoulder a very specific responsibility and role in that regard.

Under the Charter, the United Nations had solemnly committed itself to work to build a better world, he said. The process of reforming the Organization was under way, and there should be further progress during the

current session of the General Assembly. Strengthening the United Nations required democratization, maintaining a better geographic balance and protecting the interests of smaller and developing States. Cape Verde welcomed the candidacy of Brazil for membership of the Security Council. Greater cooperation with regional organizations was necessary. Success in preventing conflicts would be achieved by addressing their underlying causes -- primarily conditions that gave rise to poverty. All populations should be guaranteed a basic quality of life.

Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister, Abdulaziz Hafizovich Kamilov, said yesterday that his country was undergoing profound transformations aimed at forming a socially oriented market economy. Laws had been adopted to promote entrepreneurship and privatization, and a favourable environment had been created for potential foreign investors. The most important process of introducing a national currency had been recently completed. The number of political parties and social movements was gradually increasing, and Parliamentary elections would be held in December.

Settlement of the situation in Tajikistan and Afghanistan was a matter for the internal policy of those two countries, he continued. However, they were both neighbours of Uzbekistan and there was a threat of a regional escalation of the conflict. Uzbekistan regarded the situation with great concern and was interested in a speedy settlement by political and diplomatic means. He noted that initiatives in the Secretary-General's "Agenda for Peace" could expand the spectrum of military-political measures to stabilize the situation in regions of conflict. Those measures should be used in compliance with requests by the governments concerned, or with the consent of the conflicting parties. About 15 States had already expressed interest in participating in the permanent seminar proposed by President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan on the issue of security in Asia, under the auspices of the United Nations Mission in Tashkent.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, expressed appreciation for the important role played by the United Nations following the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. The Iraqi Government continued to defy international law and tried to deceive international public opinion through limited implementation of requirements pertaining to the weapons of mass destruction. Iraq had not yet met its obligations to recognize the State of Kuwait and its borders and to release all detainees. He hoped that Iraq's participation in the Committee dealing with prisoners and detainees was a genuine attempt to settle that issue and not just a symbolic move to appease international public opinion. Iraq was also expected to pay full compensation for all the damage caused by its aggression.

The States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) actively participated in the Middle East peace process and contributed to the bilateral talks between Arab States and Israel and to the multilateral talks, he said. The international community and the co-sponsors of the peace process between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) must ensure that Israel placed no obstacles in the path of the Palestinian National Authority as it assumed its responsibilities. The GCC States welcomed the progress achieved

(more)

in Jordanian-Israeli relations, but were concerned at the lack of progress in the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Luis Maria Ramirez Boettner, Paraguay's Minister for Foreign Affair, said democratization of his country was being consolidated. Paraguay was a pluralistic society dedicated to the protection of human rights, and would never move away from the democratic ideal. However, conditions in the international system of trade and credit must change if it were to successfully address all economic and social problems. Paraguay had been following a policy of free trade and a free exchange rate. External debt had been reduced, and the country had offered a series of tax incentives for domestic and foreign investment. It now offered some of the best investment terms in Latin America.

The MERCOSUR (Southern Cone Common Market) had recently taken a decisive step forward by establishing a common external tariff for its members, he continued. The upcoming Summit of Nations of the Americas, convened by the President of the United States, would be of great significance in the political and trade arenas. Paraguay had done much to develop ties with the international community and to break out of the isolation it had known before 1989. However, it faced a structural limitation -- its lack of a coastline. In compensation, it was at the centre of the MERCOSUR trade area. He expressed hope for strong political reforms in Cuba, reflecting the will of the people, along with the lifting of the embargo against that country.

Ablasse Ouedraogo, Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso, said Africa was shaken by upheaval and crisis which needed attention. The tragedy in Rwanda demonstrated the international community's limits. The United Nations had been forced to reassess its decision to withdraw forces from that country and to return. Without an active policy of national reconciliation, it was difficult to see calm and stability in Rwanda. Fatigue had taken over the Security Council regarding the questions of Liberia and Somalia, and the international community might abandon them. While peace could not be imposed, the President of Burkina Faso was currently engaged in subregional negotiations on behalf of those countries.

The global economy had experienced a recession that had brutally affected the developing countries, he said. The improvement of the economic climate of developing countries hinged on such steps as the elimination of tariff barriers and the transfer of technology. Africa was in a critical condition, but the international community had done nothing concrete to address the situation. He expressed hope that the soon-to-be-established World Trade Organization would take into account the interests of developing countries. Preferential treatment and compensation measures must be open to developing countries.

Guniea's Foreign Minister, Kozo Zoumanigui, said many of the world's tragedies were being played out in Africa -- a continent already sorely tried by natural disasters and forced migrations. The international community must act with greater strength and unity to end the tragic situation in Africa. For example, in the last five years, fratricidal conflict had plunged Liberia

(more)

into chaos and isolation. Despite the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the crisis continued. He appealed to the international community to become more involved in the quest for a solution to that conflict.

The desire of African countries to guarantee peace in the region was reflected by the mechanisms established by the OAU, he continued. A peace fund had been set up to support those mechanisms, but resources were extremely limited. Inequalities in trade, debt service and inequitable prices for commodities created further problems. In spite of initiatives by individual countries, the continent was experiencing an unprecedented number of social problems. He urged the international community to increase the ODA to Africa. Such assistance must take into account related social concerns. The promotion of tolerance and the elimination of poverty would strengthen the unity and stability of all nations. The Agenda for Development was an important reference document in the quest for solutions to the problems of developing countries.

Somsavat Lengsavad, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, said cooperation had grown in South-East Asia. The recent opening of the Lao-Thai friendship bridge was an important development. He hoped that the people of Cambodia would soon live in peace, in an atmosphere of national reconciliation. Meanwhile, Myanmar's efforts towards national reconciliation and an economic opening had been succeeding. Because of the interdependence of the global economy, developed countries must cooperate with developing ones to promote development for all. In order for the United Nations to carry out its task, it must be restructured and democratized.

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, economic growth had averaged between 6 and 7 per cent for the last three years, while inflation had not exceeded 10 per cent, he went on to say. Action had been undertaken to address the problem of drug trafficking. The population had been encouraged to give up the poppy crop and to choose substitute crops. A special drug abuse unit had been established, and neighbours had been encouraged to join the international fight against drug trafficking.

Albanian Foreign Minister Alfred Serreqi said his country wanted good relations with all others, especially with its neighbours. It was committed to building excellent relations with The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and to helping it to overcome its problems. That country's integrity, stability and recognition were vital for peace and security in the region. Albania also wanted peace and cooperation with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), but those relations would remain frozen pending a settlement of the Kosova issue. That issue was not merely a question of respect for the human rights of two million Albanian people, but was about recognition of the political self-governing entity for which the population of Kosova had voted in a democratic manner.

Serb and Greek nationalism threatened the Balkans, he continued. Only the world community's refusal to recognize violations of accepted principles

would compel the Serbs to give up war as a means of solving problems. The dismemberment of Bosnia and Herzegovina and ethnic cleansing were unacceptable. Albania supported the request for the lifting of the arms embargo against the Republic. Sanctions against Belgrade should not be eased, but should be tightened and implemented if the international community wanted the crises in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Sandjak, Vojvodina and Kosova to end. Greek nationalism was a growing threat to Albania and Albanians. The Albanian Government had stated that the crisis in its relations with Greece would not affect relations between Albanians and the Greek minority in Albania.

* *** *